

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SCA-01 VO-03 MMO-01 PER-01 SS-15 SP-02

ABF-01 SSO-00 /034 W

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O R 051403Z APR 76 ZFD

FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3759

INFO AMEMBASSY SEOUL

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 MANILA 4752

SEOUL FOR CONSUL GENERAL DAY

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CGEN, CVIS, RP

SUBJECT: VISA PROBLEMS AND URGENT REQUIREMENTS

REF: (A) MANILA 4224 (B) 4747

1. SUMMARY: REFTEL (A) AND PREVIOUS DESCRIBE VISA INCIDENT INVOLVING BERBAL AND PHYSICAL ASSAULT ON CONSOFFS AS WELL AS SUSTAINED PUBLIC MEDIA ABUSE AGAINST OUR VISA OPERATION. THE EXEQUATUR OF ONE VICE CONSUL INVOLVED WAS WITHDRAWN APRIL 5 (REFTEL B). THIS POINTS UP BROADER IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S. IMAGE AND POLICY WITH RESPECT TO CONSULAR OPERATIONS UNDER HIGH PRESSURE, HIGH VOLUME AND HIGH FRAUD CONDITIONS PREVAILING AT POSTS SUCH AS MANILA. WE ARE TAKING ACROSS-THE-BOARD REMEDIAL ACTION BUT WILL REQUIRE PROMPT DEPARTMENT SUPPORT ON EXPEDITING PENDING PERSONNEL ASSIGNMENTS, INCREASING COMPLEMENT BY ONE OFFICER AND TWO LOCALS REPLACING OFFICER WHOSE EXEQUATUR HAS BEEN WITHDRAWN, AND FUNDING BUILDING SPACE AND LAYOUT IMPROVEMENTS. END SUMMARY

2. ANALYSIS OF MANILA VISA OPERATION. RECENT FS INSPECTORS DESCRIBED VOLUME HERE AS "AWESOME." NOT ONLY ARE WE, FOR SIXTH STRAIGHT YEAR, BIGGEST SINGLE IMMIGRANT VISA ISSUING POST WITH OVER 27,000 IN CY75, BUT FIGURES

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MUST BE CONSIDERED IN CONNECTION 25 PERCENT REFUSAL RATE,

ALMOST 800 WAIVERS YEARLY (MOSTLY 212(A)(12)), HEAVY CONGRESSIONAL CORRESPONDENCE (OVER 2,300 IN CY75), WAITING LIST BACKED UP INTO THIRD PREFERENCE, ETC. NON-IMMIGRANT ISSUANCE FIGURES OF OVER 29,000 IN CY75 DO NOT COMPARE WITH BIG ISSUING POSTS FAVORED WITH LOW REFUSALS, BUT FACT FILIPINOS ARE BIG STATUS VIOLATORS MAKE ALMOST EIGHTY PERCENT PERSONAL INTERVIEWS NECESSARY. CURRENT APPROXIMATELY 20 PERCENT REFUSAL RATE SHOULD BE HIGHER AS EVIDENCED BY HISTORICALLY HIGH NON-RETURN RATE, ESTIMATED BY INS TO APPROACH 70 PERCENT. BOTH IVS AND NIVS ARE COMPLICATED BY EXTREMELY HIGH RATE OF FRAUD, WHICH NECESSITATES SEPARATE FRAUD UNIT, SHARED WITH CITIZENSHIP, OF ONE OFFICER AND FIVE LOCALS. UNEASY LOCAL POLITICAL/ECONOMIC ATMOSPHERE GENERATES AMONG MANY A NEAR DESPERATION TO LEAVE AND READINESS TO USE ANY DECEIT OR PRESSURE TO GET VISA. RESULT IS ALMOST TANGIBLE CONTINUING PRESSURE UPON VISA OFFICERS WHICH NOT REPEAT NOT REFLECTED IN CONSULAR PACKAGE FIGURES.

3. WITH CONTINUAL PRESSURE TO TURN OUT MORE VISAS IN MINIMAL PERIOD, TIME AVAILABLE FOR EACH OFFICER WITH EACH APPLICANT IS REDUCED BELOW MINIMUM ACCEPTABLE IN THE PREVAILING CIRCUMSTANCES. NIV OFFICERS HAVE ABOUT FIVE MINUTES PER APPLICANT AND IV LINE OFFICERS ABOUT EIGHT MINUTES. IN VIEW HIGH NON-BONAFIDES AND FRAUD THIS IS INADEQUATE. POSSIBILITY OF MISUNDERSTANDINGS IS CONSIDERABLE AND FEELING OF INSUFFICIENT ATTENTION TO APPLICANTS ALL TOO PROBABLE. PUBLIC RELATIONS ARE OFTEN STRAINED AND, AS IN CASE DESCRIBED IN REFTELS, CAN EVENTUALLY BREAK. MEDIA PLAY ON CURRENT INCIDENT HAS ALSO DREDGED UP COMPLAINTS, DORMANT FOR SOME TIME, OF PERMANENT CROWD SCENE IN FRONT OF BUILDING, OF LONG VISA LINES AND DELAYS WITHIN, OF ALLEGEDLY INDELICATE QUESTIONS ASKED BY CONSOFFS, OF "ARBITRARY" REASONS FOR REFUSALS, AND OF OTHER FILIPINO SENSITIVITIES ABOUT "BEING TREATED LIKE SECOND CLASS CITIZENS IN OWN COUNTRY." ALTHOUGH MUCH OF THE FUROR IS POLITICALLY GENERATED, THE SUBSTANCE FOR COMPLAINT EXISTS WITH SIGNIFICANT PUBLIC RELATIONS AND OPERATIONS IMPLICANTS FOR THE U.S. IMAGE AND OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS. EVEN OUR BEST FRIENDS TELL US LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SOMETHING MUST BE DONE TO IMPROVE AMERICAN CONSULAR IMAGE HERE. FOR EXAMPLE, MSGR. FLORENCIO C. YLLANA, LIAISON OFFICER, CHURCH AND STATE CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE, TOLD CHARGE APRIL 2 THAT THE APPEARANCE AND PROCESSING BY OUR CONSEC ARE PAINFULLY BELOW WHAT EXPECTED OF GREAT AMERICAN NATION. WE AGREE. IN ORDER TO DO ACCEPTABLE JOB, BOTH FROM STATUTORY AND PUBLIC RELATIONS ASPECTS, IT IS CLEAR THAT WE NEED TO MAKE SOME ADJUSTMENTS.

4. OUR FIRST REQUIREMENT IS MORE PERSONNEL TIME, ESPECIALLY OFFICER, TO BE SPENT ON APPLICANTS. WE ALSO NEED MORE FSL TIME FOR PROCESSING DOCUMENTS AND CORRESPONDENCE, AND MORE TIME OPEN TO PUBLIC. WITH RESPECT TO LATTER, WE HAVE MADE ADJUSTMENTS BEFORE NORMAL 0800 OPENING AND DURING LUNCH HOUR. WE ALSO ARE GETTING MORE LOCAL TIME BY USE OF PAID OVERTIME. BUT WE ALREADY ARE AT LIMIT OF WHAT CAN BE SQUEEZED OUT OF VISA LINE OFFICERS BEFORE PRESSURE BECOMES TOO MUCH.

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 VO-03 SCA-01 MMO-01 PER-01 SS-15 SP-02

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----- 068925

O R 051403Z APR 76 ZFD

FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3760

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5. AS DEPARTMENT AWARE FROM MANILA 2632, CONSEC, ALREADY TWO OFFICERS SHORT WITH DEPARTURES (AND DELAYED ARRIVALS OF REPLACEMENTS) OF BETTS AND ELLICE, IS NOW THREE SHORT FOLLOWING WITHDRAWAL OF EXEQUATUR, AND WILL BE FOURTH SHORT FROM MID-APRIL TO MID-AUGUST WITH CONTIGUOUS HOME LEAVES OF COOPER AND STEPHAN. SOME RELIEF WILL BE REALIZED WITH ARRIVAL OF HESKIN FOR NEW JO POSITION 692 IN MAY OR JUNE. BUT MOST DIFFICULT PERIOD IS NOW THROUGH JUNE 30 WITH HIGH WORK PRIORITY OF ISSUANCE OF REMAINDER OF NEARLY 20,000 PREFERENCE VISAS UNDER PHILIPPINE COUNTRY LIMITATION. IT IS ALSO BUSIEST NIV AND PASSPORT SEASON.

6. EMBASSY MAKING TEMPORARY, EMERGENCY INTERNAL READJUSTMENTS -- INCLUDING TEMPORARILY REPROGRAMMING OFFICERS

FROM POLITICAL ECONOMIC AND OTHER SECTIONS AND
ROBBING TIME FROM LOWER PRIORITY CONSULAR FUNCTIONS --
WHERE POSSIBLE BUT CONSEC STILL NEEDS EXTRA JUNIOR
OFFICER HELP SOONEST. DEPARTMENT'S PROMPT REPLY
(REF STATE 69936) AUTHORIZING TEMPORARY HIRE AMERICAN
DEPENDENTS OR LOCALS ALSO WILL HELP SOMEWHAT IN SECONDARY
PROBLEM AREAS. WE ALSO

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CEBU ALTHOUGH THESE
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ARE LIMITED BY GOP CENTRALIZATION OF PASSPORT ISSUANCE
IN MANILA. MORE ESPECIALLY URGENT IS TO REPLACE OFFICER
WHOSE EXEQUATUR WITHDRAWN (CON 681). ALMOST AS IMPORTANT
IS ELLICE REPLACEMENT, WHO WILL BE USED FIRST IN HIGH
PRIORITY IV WORK. IF OFFICERS TO BE ASSIGNED NOT
AVAILABLE UNTIL JUNE OR JULY, WE WOULD NEED TDY BY
OFFICERS WITH SOME EXPERIENCE IN IVS OR NIVS.

7. IT ABUNDANTLY CLEAR THAT

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4. PERSONNEL

SHORTFALLS OF EVEN A FEW WEEKS, WHETHER THEY COME FROM LATE
REPLACEMENT OF DEPARTMENT OFFICERS, HOME LEAVE, HEALTH
PROBLEMS, OR WHATEVER, HURT US MORE IN CONSEC. WHEN
THE BIG IMMIGRANT VISA MILL SLOWS DOWN FOR WHATEVER
REASON, ASSOCIATED PROBLEMS SUCH AS BACKLOGS IN SENDING
PACKETS, CONGRESSIONALS, RETURNING REFUSALS, ETC. MULTIPLY
AND ARE MORE DIFFICULT OF SOLUTION. ADDITIONAL OFFICER
DRAIN HERE IS IR VISAS AND ASSOCIATED FUNCTIONS COMING
FROM SERVICEMEN AT BIG U.S. MILITARY BASES IN
PHILIPPINES. IN ACCORDANCE WITH RECOMMENDATIONS OF
F.S. INSPECTORS, WE HAVE BEEN TRYING TO DO MANY
FUNCTIONS AT BASES THROUGH VISITS BY CONSOFFS, THUS
SAVING USG CONSIDERABLE SERVICEMEN'S TIME TRAVELLING
TO MANILA.

8. NEW 692 POSITION AND NEWLY-AUTHORIZED LOCAL SLOT PROMISE
TO GO LONG WAY TOWARD RESOLVING IV PROBLEMS. BUT NIV
PROBLEM REMAINS, AND GROWS WORSE. FY 77 INCREASES OF
ONE OFFICER AND ONE FSL, RECOMMENDED IN LAST CONSULAR
PACKAGE, NOW APPEAR MORE VITAL THAN EVEN. ADDITIONAL
FSL TO INSURE FULL STAFFING FOR IV PRODUCTION LINE,
AS "FLOATER" FOR ABSENT CHECKERS OR ASSEMBLERS, ALSO

VERY IMPORTANT. ACCORDINGLY, WE URGE THAT THE TIMING FOR IMPLEMENTING PREVIOUS CONSULAR PACKAGE RECOMMENDATIONS BE MOVED UP TO EARLIEST DATE POSSIBLE. WE OF COURSE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WILL BE MAKING DETAILED JUSTIFICATION IN NEXT PACKAGE.

9. OUR CALCULATIONS ON NIV WORKLOAD ARE BASED ON ASSUMPTION THAT GOP WILL CONTINUE TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS UPON FILIPINOS IN EFFECT SINCE IMPOSITION OF MARTIAL LAW IN 1972. BUT MANILA PRESS APRIL 2 REPORTED THAT TOURISM SECRETARY ASPIRAS HAS PROPOSED TO PRESIDENT MARCOS LIFTING OF BAN AS PART OF DEAL TO INCREASE TOURISM. THIS WOULD, OF COURSE, ALTER NIV PICTURE MATERIALLY. (MANILA'S HIGH-PRE-MARTIAL LAW YEAR WAS APPROXIMATELY 35,000 NIV ISSUANCES, AND DEMAND WOULD BE GREATER NOW.) WE MIGHT BE REQUIRED TO ISSUE AS MANY AS 40,000 IN FIRST YEAR OF FREE TRAVEL, WITH ACCOMPANYING DISPROPORTIONATE RISE IN NON-BONAFIDES AND RESULTANT REFUSALS. THIS COULD REQUIRE PERSONNEL INCREASES UP TO TWO OR THREE NIV LINE OFFICERS AND FOUR OR FIVE FSLs. FROM PERSPECTIVE OUR CONSULAR OPERATIONS, WE HOPE TOURISM SECRETARY DOES NOT PREVAIL, BUT THE PROSPECT OF GOP EASING PASSPORT ISSUANCE ARGUES FOR RESOLVING EXISTING INADEQUACIES IN PERSONNEL AND FACILITIES SOONEST.

10. CONSEC ALSO MAKING SIGNIFICANT ADJUSTMENT TO INSURE OPTIMUM WORK FLOW AND CORRECT PROCEDURES, AND ALSO UNDERTAKING PHYSICAL CHANGES TO IMPROVE ATTENTION TO PUBLIC, COMFORT, DECOR AND SECURITY. EMPHASIS HERE WILL BE TO GET VISIBLE, IRRITATING LINES OF APPLICANTS OFF STREET AND UNDER COVER BEFORE RAINY SEASON BEGINS. OTHERS WILL INCLUDE BETTER SEATING AND PUBLIC ADDRESS/MUSIC SYSTEM, IMAGINATIVE DECOR.

11. ACTION REQUESTED: (A) ASSIST IN COVERING ELLICE POSITION PER PARA 6, EITHER BY SPEEDING UP ASSIGNMENT OR SENDING TDY OFFICER FOR THREE MONTHS; (B) EXPEDITE REPLACEMENT OF OFFICER WHOSE EXEQUATUR WITHDRAWN; (C) GIVE PROMPT FAVORABLE CONSIDERATION TO OUR NEED FOR ADDITIONAL OFFICER AND TWO LOCALS MENTIONED PARA 8; (D) INSURE THAT ASSIGNED OFFICERS ARRIVE READY FOR FULL DUTY, WITHOUT HEALTH OR OTHER LIMITATIONS; AND (E) BE PREPARED TO ENCOURAGE PROMPT AND SYMPATHETIC REVIEW AND FUNDING OF PROPOSALS THAT FOLLOW SEPTTEL FOR BUILDING SPACE AND LAYOUT IMPROVEMENTS.

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NOTE BY OCT: MANILA 4752/2 #OMISSIONS. CORRECTION TO FOLLOW.

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